The bow and arrow. At this time the fiancé goes outside and invites his kinsmen to enter. The latter bring a bow and arrow. As soon as they arrive on the threshold, the one who leads them starts a song: "Mushe inama yandi, taibula mwine, walasa..." They all enter. The fiancé stands in the middle of the house drawing the bow and arrow; he is supposed to pierce a special mbusa which the women have fixed on the wall slightly above the place where his future wife is sitting. If he pierces the mbusa, there are shouts of joy: Here is a true fiancé, the girl will be his wife," etc. If he misses, the poor boy is subjected to an avalanche of scolding and cursing: "Chimbi chikesa" (There will be trouble in this household). In this case the fiancé has to submit to tests in order to show them his lack of success with the bow was due to bad luck. 881 [787]

Mwansa chembe (headdress of feathers). If the young man has succeeded in piercing the mbusa, the women take up another mbusa of clay which is set with plumes /ngala/. They use them to make a headgear for the fiancé while singing: "Wamumona Mwansa chembe, mulume wa ngala aisa...". This is to tell him that if he makes his wife suffer, so will he. 881 292

Chinungi (porcupine). The headgear is taken off and a mbusa which is a facsimile of a porcupine is brought up. This spiny mbusa is then attached to the fiancé's neck by means of a cord. The fiancé has to bend down while the women sing: "Chinungi, posa matamba, twairiwa ku isano." Then they take it off /kukobola/. 881 301

Nsensengwe. This is the fruit of a river tree which causes itching. The women knead this fruit and then rub it on the fiancée's arm with a little brush. From this moment on she ceases to be a young girl and becomes a woman (mukalamba). 884 824

Chitenge. This is a crossbeam attached to the roof inside the house. The fiancé is suspended from it and while he remains thus suspended /alapelela/ the women sing: "Lelo, atema pa chitenge," etc. He jumps down when the song is finished. 881

Mipeto (hoop). The women then make a circle around the fiancé with hoops. The fiancé takes some of the hoops and lets them roll towards his /217/ fiancée. The women sing: "Mulangire alole..." The

fiancé goes home. The fiancée gets up and jumps across several mbusa to the approving shouts of the women. 881

IMMEDIATE PREPARATIONS FOR THE WEDDING. Questions and Instructions. It is necessary to instruct the fiancée with regard to certain facts pertaining to marriage. Only a few women will be with her; other women wait outside and beat the drum in order to prevent any indiscreet ears from listening to what is said to the fiancée. The nachimbusa and the nakalamba, in particular, question the fiancée on certain details with regard to menstruation. The fiancée has to answer truthfully and make a full confession; a lie could be fatal in these circumstances. The women then give her whatever counsel and advice is deemed desirable.

Beer. Once the meeting is over, an invitation to drink beer is issued /fimalwa/. Everyone drinks beer: relatives, neighbors, friends. The drinking and dancing last through the night. 881 273

Kuoa (the bath). At dawn the women accompany the fiancée to the river; they take along some mbusa and sing: "Naya ku kuabika nkwa, mairo kusala kuli ko." When they arrive at the river, they put the fiancée in the middle of the current, even if it is very cold. She has to stay there until the sun rises. The women then take her out of her river bed and wash her. They then braid the grass bracelets which they put around her wrists and ankles while singing: "This is how your husband will give you bracelets." They pick tall grass to make a kind of tuft /isonshi/ from it, which they put on her head. While pouring water over the top of it, they sing: "Euma" (may she never be dry). 881 515 [301]

Ashes. When they return to the house, they find that the nakalamba has swept away the ashes, which have not been swept since the fiancée started having her period. These ashes are thrown under a tree called mufungo, whose fruit is delicious. This is to insure that the marriage of the two be a good one /kunakilila/. Then a basket full of filundu (tree bark garments) is brought in. This is another of the fiancé's presents. The women rub the fiancée with oil until she is streaming. The fiancé does the same. Then the women dress the fiancée /218/ as well as her younger sister /nshindishi/ with all the filundu; this is the moment for presenting the gifts in the public square. 881 [824]

Mashikulo (presents). The fiancée, adorned in her most beautiful garments, is lead out from the bush; she is backed by women attendants who sing: "Waleleka, mayo, waemba, waemba mune." (Oh,

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

123 and a good many experiments are actually made in the course of an individual's life. Where soil selection depends on accumulated experience, as it must do among shifting cultivators, this is especially the case, and a man could make many agricultural blunders between youth and manhood if he were acting alone. His type of education and system of co-operation in gardening prevent him from doing so to a certain extent. And it is for this reason that individual differences in agricultural skill, leadership, and the way in which economic knowledge is handed on to the next generation are facts of importance from an agricultural point of view.

The basis of the Bemba system of domestic co-operation has already been described (Chap. VIII), but it will be necessary to study the village and kinship groups as agricultural units and to estimate as far as possible the labour force required for each particular process and its relation to the cycle of other activities—political, religious, domestic, or recreational—which go to make up the daily or seasonal routine. The problem of diet in relation to the labour supply is obviously of particular importance in an area with such a large proportion of adult males away.

General Attitude to Land.

823 A group of Bemba walking from place to place through their tribal territory view surroundings from an entirely different standpoint from our own. Different objects excite their interest and admiration, and they comment on the scenes they pass through in different terms. This general attitude of the people towards their environment is important to describe. It expresses the line of their economic interests, and ultimately determines the legal rules by which their land is used.

823 311 Now the main aim of the Bemba cultivator is to grow as much millet as possible in any one year, and millet gardens are made by cutting off tree-tops and burning their branches. For this reason, when walking through the bush the Bemba are constantly on the watch for many and high trees. To these natives the whole stretch of land is in a sense one unit. It is all 'bush' (*mpanga*), and all potentially cultivateable. The differences between productive and unproductive soil, in their eyes, is the presence or absence of trees. What the European regards as yet another stretch of monotonous bush is to the Bemba a possible garden site. Trees are the ultimate source of his food-supply. More than this, they are the means by which all the material equipment of his life is secured.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

000 322 [283]

which all the material equipment of his life is secured. Huts, granaries, fences, beds, stools, drums, canoes—in fact, all the furniture of domestic and village existence—are made of wood. Bark forms the rope (*umwando*) used for nets and snares, or the rough strands (*lushishi*) with which poles are lashed together in building.

The skill and the speed with which the Bemba handle wood is amazing. A new-comer to the country is surprised to hear a fellow European arriving at his camp shout casually, 'Make me a table and a couple of chairs just there,' and to see the furniture grow out of the ground in the space of about half an hour. But this expertize, very widespread among the forest peoples of Africa, is ultimately dependent on the natives' knowledge of the properties of the different woods in their environment and on their perpetual watchful attention of the bush around them. Near their homes they must know where to find straight poles for uprights, pliable branches for roof frames, and hard wood for the handles of spears and other implements, and for five or ten miles round a village there are everywhere signs that an axe has been at work—a trunk newly barked for fibre, a raw stump showing where a tree has been felled, or a pile of new wood shavings marking where poles have been cut and trimmed before being carried back to the settlement. It is no wonder that the people seem to have a passionate interest in trees as such. Torday classifies many of these Central African peoples as 'forest-dwelling Bantu',[1] and it is an apt term.

824

All Bemba children of the age of 10, or even under, can point out the different species of trees quickly, even though they do not know their full uses until later. A European with no botanical inclinations finds it hard to distinguish between so many similar-looking trees, but the Bemba can name fifty or sixty species without hesitation. This interest is mostly utilitarian. The flowers which star the bush with such brilliant colours after the rains do not seem to attract the people, unless they can be used as medicines. Many flowers have no names. Most natives are merely irritated when a white man asks questions about the more striking flowers on the path. They answer, 'That is a flower [*ni maluba*]. Yes, and that is a flower also! They are all just flowers [*malubafye!*].' On the subject of trees, however, their faces light up and they are endlessly willing to talk.

This vivid interest in the forest is reflected in magic belief. It

[1] *African Races*, E. Torday, 1930.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

This vivid interest in the forest is reflected in magic belief. It

824 is well known that in most Bantu languages the word for tree (*umuti*, or its equivalent form) is used for medicine or charm. It is not only that Africans have a wide knowledge of the curative properties of the roots, leaves and bark of different trees, but that they believe them to possess magical properties against ill health, witchcraft, or evil spirits. I know no Bemba charm which does not contain the roots, bark, or leaves of at least two different trees.

824 To his knowledge of the species of trees and plants in the neighbourhood, the native allies a keen interest in their whereabouts. As he walks through the bush he registers almost unconsciously the presence or absence of certain trees in a way that constantly surprises the European. Such memories seem indelibly impressed on the Bemba because of their practical importance. Driving 400 miles from Broken Hill to Kasama, the centre of the district, there is nothing to be seen all day but a flat expanse of trees, mostly deciduous, with hard shiny leaves, and dusty shrubs and grasses block the view from the road. Europeans tend to find this bush country unbearably monotonous, but the African apparently sees quite a different scene. To him such a route would be described in terms of trees. Every turn in a fifteen-mile walk would be defined in such phrases as, 'Where that big *mupundu* grew', or 'Where that *umusuku* stood with the broken branch', and so forth, the whole punctuated with cries of enthusiasm: 'That was a fine tree!' These people's thoughts and interests are in fact entirely concentrated on objects that the average white man simply does not see.

222 Besides their need for wood the Bemba rely on the bush for the animals and birds, caterpillars, insects, and the plants which are indispensable for their diet, and they are constantly on the look-out for such objects as they walk. Both men and women have the power of continuing an animated conversation without ever missing a single honey-bee nest or a distant mushroom, and remembering how to locate such a find a second time. I once stumbled on a bush path, turning suddenly to look at a strip of sunset against a black cloud. The native who helped me up said sympathetically, looking at the bough which he believed had riveted my attention, 'Yes, I saw that swarm of caterpillars too, but the grubs are not big enough to eat yet. I shall tell my wife to fetch them later on. I shall say, "Look for the *umutondo* tree to the east of where the path forks".' His observations had been made in a flash during our

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

a number of cultivators, I came to the conclusion that all natives distinguish the slow- from the quick-growing millet (*mwangwe*). the perennial Kaffir corn (*sonkwe*) from the more common annual (*amasaka*), and the quick-growing maize (*kaliminwa*) from the slow-growing (*punga*). These strains they keep apart and sow separately. The long-vined cow-pea (*ililanda lya nkula*) is also distinguished from the shorter (*ililanda lya nceshya*) or another variety with small pods (*ililanda lya busulala*). Pumpkin and gourd seeds are actually selected from plants that bore well the previous year, especially in the case of the gourds used to hollow out for beer-gourds, dippers, or oil flasks. But, for the rest, though older natives distinguish about twenty different kinds of millet, according to the colour or size of the seed, and many varieties of maize, Kaffir corn, and legumes, they do not seem to select one type of seed rather than another when planting their gardens.

Women generally plant the subsidiary crops, especially those on the *mputa*. This is not a long operation, since the aim of the gardener is to sow a succession of vegetables, and therefore she plants her mounds from week to week throughout the sowing season.

The art of sowing consists in the careful planting of seeds on the mounds to suit their habit of growth and time of ripening. The Bemba reckon to grow at least two different vegetables on each *mputa*. Thus, pumpkins are often planted round the base of a mound on the top of which maize or Kaffir corn has been sown. Their long vines trail between the *mputa* while the grain crop shoots up on top. Sweet potatoes are also paired with Kaffir corn, since the former are dug up in October and the mounds can then be left to 'get rich' (*ukufunda*) till the latter is sown in December. cassava and sweet potatoes make another pair, and these are planted together. The cuttings of cassava are stuck vertically on top, and the sweet potatoes at an angle on the sides. Beans and peas are also commonly grown with Kaffir corn or maize. The long-vined cow-pea (*ililanda lya nkula*) is very carefully placed on the top of a mound because of its growth.[1]

Natives are convinced of the value of this system of mixed planting. Near Kasama, a man who had filled his *mputa* with cassava only was criticized as being lazy, although the mounds

[1] It may even be scattered broadcast on a *icifwani* garden with small mounds dug in between or mixed with Kaffir corn and sown in the same fashion.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

226
463
[829]

race apart, although in reality they differ from other Bemba merely in regard to their fixed habitation, greater degree of intermarriage, and independence of their neighbours. It will be best to sketch fishing methods in general as they are practised all over the country, and then to describe the more complex type of occupation characteristic of these riverine villages.

221
226

Bemba methods of fishing, whether by trapping, netting, or poisoning, are only successful in shallow waters. For this reason fish are only caught easily during two seasons of the year: (*a*) *April and May*, i.e. at the end of the rains when the waters are falling on the flats and banks, and the fish may be caught returning to the big rivers from the smaller streams and backwaters, where they had gone to breed a few months earlier. (*b*) *September to November*, i.e. when the level of the water in the rivers has fallen to its lowest and trapping or netting is possible in the main body of the stream, and poison can be used in the smaller rivers. Fish may also be caught sometimes on their way upstream to breed in January or February. But in a river as big as the Chambesi fishing of one kind or another is practised all the year round.

The natives recognize no close season for breeding. Questioned as to why they wish to trap fish that are full of eggs or young fish that are undersized, they answer in some such terms as, 'Well, it is no use leaving the fish for some one else to catch, is it?'

(*a*) *Methods.*

226
[278
324]

1. *Fish poisoning*. The simplest method of catching fish is by the use of a stupefying poison known as *ububa*, which is obtained from the crushed leaves of a bushy plant (*Tephrosia*) cultivated especially for the purpose in any village near a stream.[1] Fish poisoning (*ukusungilo buba*) is a co-operative activity in which the whole village, men, women, and children, join, and which is quite unskilled. The whole village may go out together under the orders of the headman, or a group of villagers may plan their own expedition. The best time of year for such fishing is August to November, when the waters are at their lowest.[2] On the smaller rivers such fishing parties are

[1] Mr. E. B. H. Goodall in *Some Wemba Words*, 1921, states that *buba* is used as a collective term to cover all forms of fish poison collected from various roots and leaves, including the cultivated plant, *kowamushi*, and different forest trees and shrubs, but I only heard the name used for the former.

[2] I have known natives try to fish by this method much earlier, i.e. in July and August, but this will depend on the height of the water.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

The Ceremony

[881] The maize cob was then tied with special creepers to a branch of the tree, and Nangoshye and the two elder women dodged to get it into their mouths. Then a girl climbed up and tied the maize cob to a high bough. The *banacisungu* had to try to climb up, leg first. They were finally helped on to the bough by the younger helpers.

('The girls are to imitate monkeys because the monkeys eat everything on the trees.' 'The monkey is always stealing. A good wife must try to find food for her family whenever she can. This song is to make the girls imitate the monkey.')[1]

'*The monkey eats everything that bears freely*
That is why he climbs the mukolobondo tree.' (*No.* 11)

'*The monkey calls its mother.*' (*No.* 12)

The honouring of the musuku tree

[824] The next rite was the blessing of the *musuku* tree which is one of the symbols of womanhood in this tribe. It was described as '*ukusapila mbusa*'. Two small rings of white beads were tied round twigs of the tree and the girls were made to bite them off in their mouths and give them to Nangoshye. Having taken the decorated twigs in her mouth, she began to jog up and down and to offer them in her mouth to the elder *banacimbusa* in order of seniority. Each one went down on her knees and reached out both hands to take the twigs covered with the saliva of the woman who offered them. As each woman took the emblem she made the *ulla ulla* [576] sound of general congratulation.

[824] ('The girls are to get firewood always now.' 'It is to honour the *musuku* tree. If we did not do this there would be no parenthood for the girls.' 'Why?' 'Because the *musuku* is a tree that bears much fruit.' 'This is called "the blessing of the child's *mbusa* with spittle".' (*ukupalila imbusa shya umwana*).

Then came the first singing of the song, 'The arm-pit can never be higher than the shoulder' (No. 13) which was repeated so often during the subsequent rites. The song appears to represent the

[1] *Subsequent Bemba interpretation* (A.C.). 'The monkey steals. It is to frighten the girl from stealing. Hunger forces one to do the unusual, i.e. climb a tree upside down. It brings trouble.'

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

unalterable prerogatives of age. As a man's arm-pit can never be higher than his shoulder so the younger can never be more important than the older.

Preparation of the emblem bundles

Bundles of domestic emblems were now made up. These consisted of things commonly used in daily life—firewood, salt, meat, tobacco, the various seeds used in cooking, red cam wood powder, twigs of trees with magic properties and particularly of the woman's trees (*mwenge*, *mufungu* and *musuku*).

There followed an interminable series of songs. The initiation candidates hung uncomfortably from the branches of the tree, while beneath the emblems were offered, taken in the mouth and honoured by each of the women in turn, the company singing over and over again:

> '*Let me pick it up*
> *Let me pick it up with my mouth.*
> *My mbusa.*' (*No.* 14)

At last, the girls were brought down from the tree and with five or six of the younger helpers they were told to lead a round dance. They were shy, tied and awkward, and the dance went lamely. It was evidently important, however, that an impression of jollity should be given for the older women sat round them screeching vehemently, 'Rejoice, can't you? You girls, why can't you manage to rejoice?' Asked why this was necessary, Nangoshye said shortly, 'They must do it for respect.'

The mock bridegrooms

It was now between one and two o'clock, and we turned to go back to the village. As we went, two women dashed across the front of the procession shouting. They had armed themselves with toy bows and arrows and had tied twigs round their heads. They had leaf cups similar to those of the fish trap ceremony hung all over them. They were shouldering a long sapling on which hung a piece of ant-hill to represent a load. They had stained themselves all over with the red powder.

These were the sisters of the bridegrooms and they were greeted

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

The Ceremony

Either the company was exhausted or else they had the feeling that the ceremony was coming to an end or that this particular rite was not of great significance.

Honouring the mwenge tree

One of the older women had cut a supple branch of a *mwenge* tree *en route*, and we assembled at the base of a tree of this kind. There followed one of the rites of 'honouring the *mbusa*' repeated so often during the chisungu. The vessels in which the emblems were carried were covered and uncovered by the leading actors, and the *banacimbusa* present were offered the same objects ritually in order of precedence. It was characteristic of this particular ceremony that every object touched was handled with the mouth and not the hand. Nangoshye picked grass with her mouth from under the tree and spat it over the *mbusa*. She spat red cam wood powder over the roots of the *mwenge* tree. She took a hoe in her mouth and started to clear a space under the tree, only taking the implement in her hands to finish the clearing more completely. Throughout the rite the drums were going and the women sang, (No. 14):

'*Pick up what you have,*
Pick up things with the mouth.'[1]

As objects were offered in order to the older women they sang again the song of precedence:

'*The arm-pit is not higher than the shoulder.*'

Everyone seemed rather bored and hot under the midday sun. Nangoshye had to exert all her authority to keep the party going. She scolded them for leaving behind one of the domestic emblems—the whitewash. 'It isn't a laughing matter to dance the chisungu' she said. She continued singing with the rest of the lack-lustre company, but in an exasperated sort of way as though anxious to get through with a tedious task, yet under compulsion not to skimp the work.

(This part of the ceremony was described as the honouring of the *mwenge* tree. It will be remembered that the *musuku* tree, the

[1] *Subsequent Bemba interpretation* (A.C.): What people say should not be taken for true. Do not gossip!

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

881 female tree representing fertility, was honoured in the same way
824 during the first bush ceremony (p. 70). The *mwenge* is another female tree, representing apparently the pliancy of the woman, just as the *mulombwa*, the hard-wood tree which exudes a red juice, represents the male, the lion, and in some cases the chief.

881 The act of picking up objects with the mouth was described as a method of honouring the *mbusa* or the *mwenge* tree, with the complementary remark that things were picked up in the mouth because it was unusual. The girls must learn to do unusual things, said one woman.)

The drinking of the beer

Nangoshye then dug a small hole in the ground under the *mwenge* tree and poured the small gourd of beer into it. The earth seemed to hold the thick sludge of the beer and its foam frothed level with the surface of the ground. Nangoshye scattered red dye powder, small rings of white beads and lumps of white clay on top. She was still exasperated and paused to scold the helpers: 'Who has drunk some of the beer on the way down?' she asked. This was a serious matter and not just a time when you could snatch beer without ceremony just as you pleased. However, she addressed herself to the rite in hand without waiting to clear the matter up. She lay on her back beside the hole and supporting herself on her two elbows bobbed up and down to the drum beats until she got herself into position. Then she lowered her head on to the ground near the hole and lapped some of the beer with her tongue, first on the right side and then on the left. She was followed by the senior *banacimbusa* and finally by all the helpers in turn. Each had to make a formal obeisance to Nangoshye and to me. It was quite a difficult operation to carry out and each woman who managed to suck up a lot of beer was greeted with shouts of applause and song:

> '*I shall not answer you*
> *I shall not answer you, useless creature.*'[1]

881 The two girls themselves then had to drink from the hole with
522 much advice and shouting. The company was by now very much

[1] *Subsequent Bemba interpretation* (A.C.): 'Do not talk when under the influence of drink.'

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

The Ceremony

[881] The branch was then stuck in the ground and bent over to form an arch while the *mwenge* branch was crossed over it at right angles to form a double hoop, known as the *mupeto*. Everyone was now animated and interested, even though it was about one o'clock and they had had no solid meal during the day. The *mulombwa* bough was brittle and broke, but the company waited for the best part of an hour for a new one to be found, and they waited in the best of spirits, laughing and talking of this and that. The hoop was apparently to be set up for a trial jump to see if the girls could clear it. This they finally did.

The return of the lion killers

In the meantime, Nangoshye and some helpers had been to look [824] for a heavy log of a third tree—the *kabumba*—which represents a lion, and was throughout described as the lion. The two girls again knelt holding it on their shoulders, and again the older woman [535] offered the *mbusa* to it one by one with endless singing, drumming and dancing. Finally, Nangoshye danced up to it brandishing an axe tied round with leaves as was done in the old days when a lion had been killed and purification of the lion-killers took place at a chief's court. The effect of this solo dance was electrical. The company shouted and danced and broke into the famous song:

Kakoshi sompa! Cilipi! Cilipi!

that used to be sung by lion-killers and also by a man who had had his eyes put out for some offence and was made to come and do obeisance to the chief who had given the order for his punishment.

The return to the village was uproarious. Each of the *banacisungu* carried one of the hoops of the *mupeto* with the two ends lashed together to form a hoop. The log lion was balanced and carried on their shoulders. Nangoshye and the older *banacimbusa* brandished axes and hoes, running and shouting all the way. At the entrance to the village the girls were covered with a black cloth and the rest formed into some sort of a procession. The older [302] women and I were daubed with red dye and castor oil. The oil melted the red powder in the sun and a single spot spread to make a great crimson splash on the side of the face, so that we must have had an uncouth and eerie appearance. In fact, some of the younger girls, mission-trained, began to look embarrassed and to refuse to